



February 13 & 20 "New Yorker" Cover (detail) by John W. Tomac

A Collective Fast for Xenophobic Times

Lent has often been considered a personal time to 'fast'—deny ourselves something we enjoy so that we can focus ourselves on God and the "self-denial" of Jesus and "give alms" to those in need. But this year, because of the rise of xenophobia and outright expressions of suspicion and hatred of the "other", our fasting **MUST** result in more than just self-denial or even charity. It **MUST** result in justice for our neighbors.

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Why a "Compact for Immigrant and Refugee Justice"?

Throughout last year's election campaign, candidate Donald Trump tapped into anti-immigrant, anti-refugee and anti-Muslim sentiment among many Americans. He identified the millions of undocumented immigrants as the main reason for his candidacy—calling them rapists and hardened criminals. He proposed a ban on Muslim immigrants and refugees, and at one point proposed a Muslim registry. Now, as President, he has continued to pound the drum of fear, claiming that undocumented immigrants are the primary cause of violence in Chicago, that Syrian refugees are terrorists seeking to destroy the United States, and that the solution is a border wall, mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, and "extreme vetting" of anyone entering the country. One of his first Executive Orders placed a temporary travel ban from 7 predominantly Muslim nations and an indefinite ban of refugees from war-torn Syria. While the order was stopped by the courts, he continues efforts to deny entry to the US. He has continued to promote the building of a wall along the Mexican

border and has stepped up raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The result has been anxiety and fear within the immigrant, refugee and Muslim communities who now feel vulnerable to harassment, discrimination, deportation, and even life-threatening violence.

In the midst of the rising xenophobia, Jesus Followers have risen up to advocate for immigrants and refugees, reminding God's people of the Biblical call to care for "the alien and stranger" and of Jesus' words, "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." Love of the stranger—xenophilia—is a mark of God's faithful people, and Jesus expanded the definition of "neighbor" to include those who were of a different faith and even one's enemy.

Our immigrant sisters and brothers need to know that followers of Jesus are their allies. Our refugee sisters and brothers need to know that followers of Jesus will not abandon them. Our Muslim sisters and brothers need to know that followers of Jesus will not seek their harm. Now more than ever.

How Can We Fast for Immigrant and Refugee Justice?

**Fasting is not just about giving up something; it is about working for God's justice.
THROUGHOUT LENT WE WILL INTENTIONALLY
Renounce Xenophobia & Reject Hate**

AND WE WILL

Take action for and with immigrants & refugees who live in fear.

- **Together, we'll oppose Executive Orders and Legislative Policies that harm our neighbors.**

Join the Resistance Tuesdays Rally at the Federal Building, 230 S. Dearborn each Tuesday at 3:30 pm.

- **Together, we'll advocate for immigrant and refugee rights.**

Participate in the Day of Action at the State Capital in Springfield on March 15.

Participate in our annual Occupy Palm Sunday Action on April 9. (Details to come.)

- **Together, we'll hold vigil for those facing deportation and for their families.**

Participate in the Prayer Vigils at the Broadview Detention Center each Friday at 7:15 am

- **Together, we'll support refugee families and organizations that are aiding immigrant families.**

Volunteer at Justice for our Neighbors Legal Clinic at Humboldt Park United Methodist Church or another organization that works directly with immigrants and refugees.

Financially Support an immigrant advocacy organization.

Participate in the 35th Ward or 33rd Ward Community Defense Committee

- **Together, we'll increase our Biblical and Social Conscience regarding "Strangers".**

Through reading Scriptures and books, hearing the stories of refugees and immigrants, and monitoring national and local news, we will gain new insight into the immigrant experience and become attuned to God's hearts for "the alien and stranger." Several suggested books are: Welcoming the Stranger by Matthew Soerens, Our God is Undocumented by Ched Meyers, and The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver.

We recognize that no one can do everything, but we encourage you to participate in at least ONE ACTION each week throughout Lent that will connect you to immigrants & refugees and increase your "love of strangers."

Together, we will experience God's gracious transformation and renewal so that "Stranger Love" becomes a natural practice of our faith in Jesus.

Resources, reflections and additional suggestions for action will be posted regularly at the Lenten Compact blog: www.lentencompact.wordpress.com.